



Briefing: Community sponsorship can address skills shortages by expediting refugee employment

This briefing is written in the context of the recent launch of Australia's new Community Refugee Integration and Settlement Pilot (CRISP), funded by the federal government and publicly launched by Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA) in mid 2022. It also contemplates the imminent national 'Jobs Summit' which will consider, among other things, measures required to ease skills shortages and maintain full employment in Australia.

A first-of-its-kind in Australia, the program is inspired by Canada's long-standing and successful community refugee sponsorship program. Through the CRISP local groups of five or more volunteers band together to initiate the resettlement of a refugee family into their local community and then support them in their integration into the local community, including help finding employment.

The contribution that refugees have made to the Australian economy as employees, entrepreneurs and consumers is well documented,¹ but it is also a concern that despite high levels of motivation and a diversity of skill-sets, '[i]f there is a weak link in Australia's settlement record, it is getting refugees into jobs soon after they arrive.'²

Decades of data from Canada offers strong empirical evidence that the CRISP offers a way for Australia to resettle more refugees who will find work quickly and help to ease skills shortages in local areas with the help of their local community supporter groups. Community sponsorship allows new arrivals to tap into the extensive social and professional networks of their sponsor group members, as well as learn from their sponsors about local employment conditions, expectations and opportunities. As community sponsorship typically involves refugee newcomers receiving support from a group of five or more local volunteers, there is a much wider network of knowledge and support available to the individual newcomer and family unit than that experienced by a refugee newcomer who is initially only supported by a single professional caseworker or close family members. Canadian data indicates:

- A strong beneficial effect of sponsorship on employment outcomes, especially in the first two years of arrival, even after taking into account demographic differences between privately sponsored refugees (PSRs) and government-assisted refugees (GARs), especially for disadvantaged refugees (eg women with little education) (Kaida, Stick & Hou, 2020)³
- 70% of sponsored refugees find employment within their first full year post arrival (IRCC, 2016)⁴

Anecdotal evidence from the very first week of the CRISP program in action is already supporting this assertion - One of the first refugees arriving under the program in late August 2022 had four potential job opportunities lined up before even landing in Australia thanks to the efforts and networks of his community supporter group.⁵

¹ Deloitte Access Economics, [Economic and social impact of increasing Australia's humanitarian intake](#) (2019), Centre for Policy Development, [Seven Steps to Success: Enabling Refugee Entrepreneurs to Flourish](#) (2019)

² Centre for Policy Development, [Settling Better Report](#) (2017) p 5

³ Kaida, Hou & Stick, [The Long-term Economic Outcomes of Refugee Private Sponsorship](#) (2020)

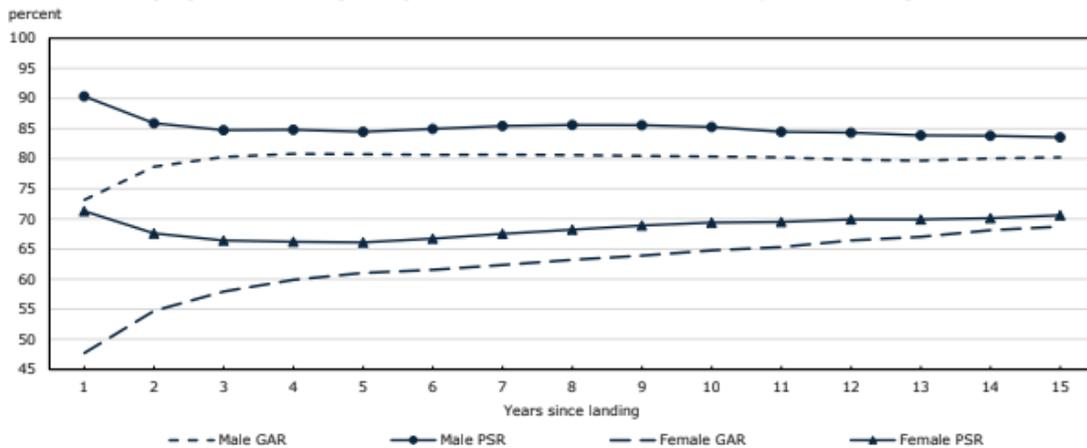
⁴ Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada [Evaluation of the Settlement Program](#) (2016)

⁵ CRSA can provide more information on request

Annexure

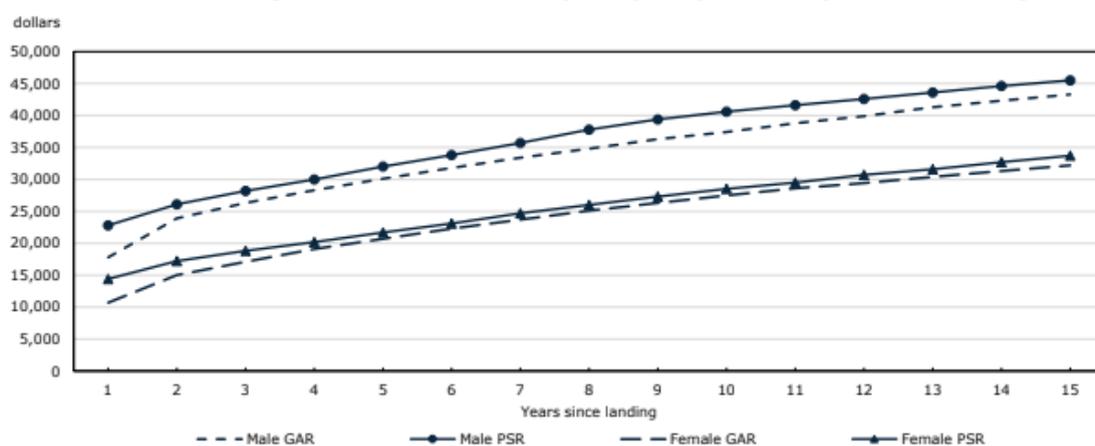
Extracts from Kaida, Hou & Stick, *The Long-term Economic Outcomes of Refugee Private Sponsorship* (2020)

Chart 1
Observed employment rates by entry class, for male and female refugees, 1 to 15 years since



Note: GAR: government-assisted refugee; PSR: privately sponsored refugee.
Source: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database, 1980 to 2015.

Chart 2
Observed annual earnings of male and female refugees by entry class and years since landing



Notes: GAR: government-assisted refugee; PSR: privately sponsored refugee.
Source: Statistics Canada, Longitudinal Immigration Database, 1980 to 2015.

Extracts from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, *Evaluation of the Settlement Program (2016)*

Figure 1: Percentage of Refugee Families Who Declared Social Assistance Benefits by Year since Admission and Immigration Category (2002-2012)

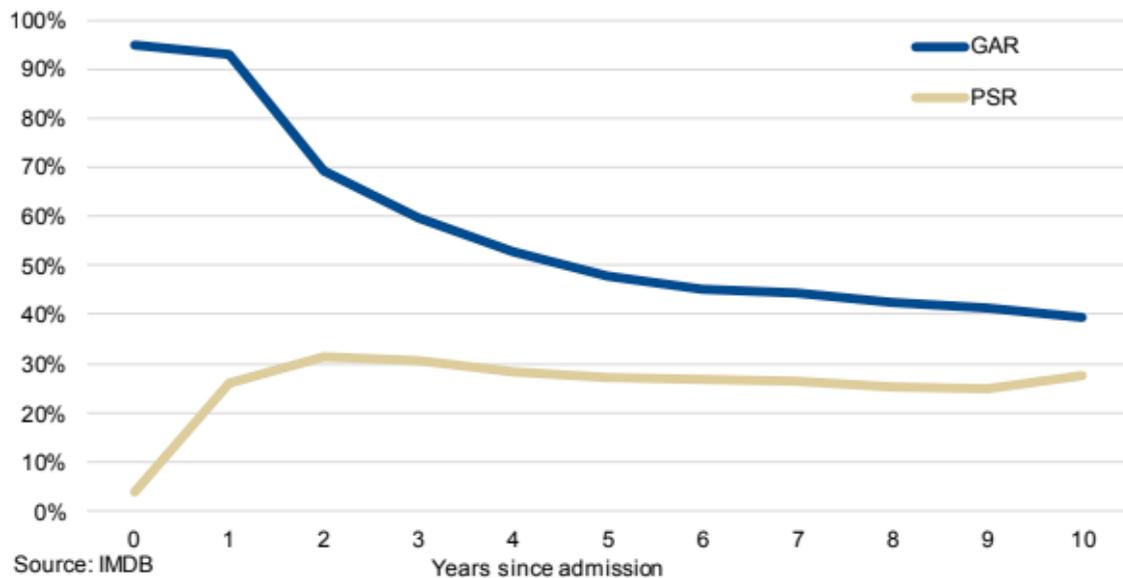


Figure 2: Percentage of Individual Refugees Who Declared Employment Earnings by Year since Admission and Immigration Category (2002-2012)

